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S E C R E T COLOMBO 000864

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/24/14

TAGS: AMGT CE MV

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 075 (05/24/04)

Classified by DCM James F. Entwistle for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

CONTENTS: FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CROSSES THE AISLE
- POSSIBLE PEACEKEEPING ROLE FOR SRI LANKA ARMY
- MALDIVIAN AT GITMO

FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CROSSES THE AISLE

¶1. (SBU) FYI. Late May 21, longtime UNP MP and former Foreign Minister Tyrone Fernando formally joined President Kumaratunga's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The probable reason for Fernando's defection is his ire at the UNP for being left off the UNP's "national list," and thus out of Parliament for the first time in years. As we reported in April, Fernando resigned from the party and wrote a public letter of complaint to former PM Wickremesinghe on April. It is not immediately clear what role Fernando will play in the SLFP. (POL)

POSSIBLE PEACEKEEPING ROLE FOR SRI LANKA ARMY

¶2. (C) Please also pass to WHA, IO/PHO, PM/SO/CCP: Post learned on May 21 that the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) has been invited by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations to send a battalion to the UN mission in Haiti. SLA staff officers have been tasked to quietly ascertain what equipment would be needed, what costs would be associated and how the mission would be executed. Calls have been made to army peacekeeping experts in Nepal and possibly Bangladesh, and queries have been made with our Defense Attaché. While we are not aware of a political decision to deploy troops outside of Sri Lanka, the SLA has been building a peacekeeping school at Kukule Ganga that will officially open in June 2004. Post would appreciate any additional information available on the veracity of the invitation or the mission requirements for a battalion to deploy. (DAO)

MALDIVIAN AT GITMO

¶3. (S) FYI - we are preparing a frontchannel on this subject based on our conversations over there last week. Moreover, we got a dipnote from the GoRM today advising us that the left behind family in Maldives is "depressed" since they haven't heard anything about the detainee's welfare for eight months and asking for an update on his condition. (DCM)

LUNSTEAD